

SOUTH-AFRICAN PARALLELS

Ukrainians know relatively little about South Africa. This country is usually associated with until-recently condemned by the world community apartheid system, lots of diamonds and gold, crocodiles, lions and other exotic animals. It is true, by production of gold, chromium, vanadium and metals of the platinum group SA takes the first place in the world. By its annual per capita income (USD 2700) SA which is five times higher than in Ukraine, its territory is twice as big as the Ukrainian territory with the population 10 millions less than the Ukrainian one. SA is probably the only country in the world where on one street, in Soweto, lived tree Nobel Prize winners: ex-President of the ANC Albert Lutuli; ex-President of the RSA Nelson Mandela and archbishop Desmond Tutu.

Radical changes in the country's political life started in early 90s. The country had refused from the apartheid system and under the leadership of Nelson Mandela set up for construction of a democratic society. Unique problems came to the surface in the new transforming society, high level of criminality in particular. However SA is not alone in this respect, many countries in economic and political transition are facing very similar problems. From 31 August to 1 September this year. The SA Institute of Foreign Relations (Johannesburg) organized an international conference on the development of criminality in the countries in transition of socio-economic and political systems. Ukrainian experts also participated in this conference, including a representative of the Ukrainian Centre for Economic and Political Studies (UCEPS).

CRIME A LA SOUTH AFRICA AND CRIME A LA UKRAINE

Representatives of more than 20 foreign countries took part in the Conference. The Minister of National Security of the RSA, Minister of GB for Northern Ireland affairs and Deputy Minister of the Police of Nigeria personally addressed the audience.

SA experts noted that their country has reached the climax of criminal activity. In 1998 it took the first place in the world as to the per capita number of murders, rapes, other serious crimes. Although in 1999 the situation was somewhat stabilized (decreased number of murders, arsons) the situation remains dangerous and alarming. Twenty three thousand people were murdered (in Ukraine - 4 600 murders). The country now resembles a huge army, every tenth citizen of the country legally possesses fire arm(s), but how many illegal weapons are in the country now one would venture to estimate. In some regions of the country it is dangerous to come out to the street without military escort. Conference participants, who paid a visit to Alexandria (a city of black population) were accompanied by a police patrol with machine-guns, and the peoples were strictly forbidden to leave their buses.

It is obvious that such high level of criminality is directly related to low living standards of the majority of the black population, high rate of unemployment among them (in some parts of the country the unemployment level is up to 50%) , and legislative ignorance of the majority of population. One of the conclusions that the participants made, was that socio-economic factors are among the most decisive in terms of crime level. The same conclusion is equally applicable to Ukraine, the RSA or Brazil. UN representatives stated that there is a direct correlation between the human development and crime increase indexes. But there also is significant return impact, i.e., dramatic criminal situation hampers the development of businesses, impedes the inflow of foreign investment into the country.

Proliferation of drugs has become another international problem. It was taken up by representatives of Russia, Brazil, the USA and some other countries. Here we are equals with SA, in each country, during 1999, there were committed 40 000 crimes related to illegal drugs manufacturing, trafficking and disposal. Rate of drugs consumption among young South Africans and Ukrainians increases dramatically. Illegal drugs traffic to Ukraine comes from the countries of Asian region whereas to SA drugs come from South America, Columbia in particular. According to the UN estimates, the annual income of the narco-industry reaches USD400 bn, which in combination with the highest level of technical equipment allows the narco-mafia to equally compete with governments of some countries. It creates significant threat to lives and health of millions of people, possess real danger to the world stability and international and regional security. Early this September in Columbian mountains there was found a semi-finished submarine, capable to carry from 150 to 200 tones of heroin. According to some sources, in the construction of this submarine the Columbian Mafioso were assisted by their Russian "colleagues". And such cases are not unique. Drugs trafficking is a business in which criminals of many countries are involved, which means that only joint efforts and close co-operation between law-enforcement bodies of the interested countries could resist the development of drugs trade internationally.

Much attention the conference paid to the issue of interrelationship between the public and the police. It was acknowledged that the level of credibility of the public towards the law-enforcement organs was not high. For instance, the results of the public opinion poll held in July 2000 by the UCEPS, only 11.8% of Ukrainians unconditionally trust the militia; 20.2% of Ukrainians are more or less satisfied with the activity of the militia. In SA the situation is almost the same, only 30% of South Africans are satisfied with the activity of the police. The reason of the mistrust could be found back in the times of apartheid when the police played a decisive role in the de-facto-civil-war in the country.

Political changes initiated by Nelson Mandela in the early 90s caused significant transformations in role and mission of the police. The aim was: to depoliticise the activity of the police bodies; increase their accountability to the public and make its activity more transparent; eradicate racial discrimination; reform its internal structure, its personnel training system and administration. Now the head of the National Police must annually introduce to the public the business plan for the coming year, major priorities, main tasks. The change of the name of the SA police organ symbolized a drastic shift from the policy of force to service to the public. Personnel ranks were also changed, military ranks were cancelled which meant demilitarization of the police. Due to the process of gradual racial integration 55% of National police forces are black people. A special attention is paid to inter-relationship between the police forces and the public. Every police-station has a so-called public-police forum to facilitate an open dialogue with citizens.

Such experience would be useful for Ukraine either. Recently, in Ukraine, there was made an announcement about amendments to the Law "On Militia" to re-name it into the Police, which also is quite symbolic. On actual completion of internal restructuring (at least to the extent the South Africans did) we could make a concrete step towards creation of a civilized police service.

It was strange that SA representatives did not mention combating corruption as a priority area. In fact, historical influence of the British and Holland cultures had had positive results - corruption had not taken roots in SA, unlike it happened in Ukraine, where corruption had become a real threat to the national security.

The participants of the Conference were unanimous in defining the necessary conditions for crime combating. The formula is very simple - political will of the country's leadership; highly professional, uncorrupted, technically and financially sufficient law-enforcement bodies; and public support. Time will show whether Ukraine could be able to realize this simple formula. So far there were some positive results in curbing unorganized or "street" crime, however there was no significant improvement in combating corruption and organized crime.

DIVIDENDS OUT OF FRIENDSHIP

Ukraine may be interested not only in learning SA experience in crime combating and transforming its law-enforcement bodies. SA is a well developed country with GDP exceeding USD 100 bn. The country has become a sub-regional leader influencing developments taking place not only in Southern Africa but on the whole continent.

In opinions of South African diplomats, our two countries have wonderful potential for co-operation. Ukraine and SA are too far from each other to have any political disagreements. Significant improvement in the bilateral trade could bring tangible improvement in economic situation in both countries. However our trade turnover is extremely unstable and unpredictable, e.g., in 1996 Ukraine exported to SA goods worth USD 1.1 m; in 1998 - the export flow increased seven-fold; in 1999 - dramatic 2-time decrease to USD3.8 m. The same picture is observed in imports from SA: 1996 - USD8.6 m; 1998 - USD 2.9 m; 1999 - 9.2 m.

SA Deputy President J Zuma is planning to visit Ukraine on 17 September. We hope that this visit will facilitate not only the further development of political ties but also mutually beneficial economic co-operation. In the opinion of South Africans, Ukraine and SA could fruitfully co-operate in agriculture. SA possesses the most up-to-date technologies for processing and preservation of agricultural products. Its is an open secret that Ukraine annually loses more than 10% of its crops and SA technologies could be of use to us. On the other hand, south African wine producers could be interested in our grape cultivars bred by Odessa-based Tairav scientific research institute. South African safety facilities may decrease the number of accidents and casualties in our mining industry (in 1999, Ukraine purchased such facilities worth USD2.8 m) . South Africans could also offer Ukrainians their unique technologies of processing coal into liquid fuel. In 1997 there was established a joint Ukrainian-SA venture OMITECH working in this field. We should also keep in mind the potential for co-operation in the military and technical sphere. To the North of SA one can find piles of Soviet-made weaponry in need of maintenance and repair. Ukraine could also offer its potential in ship and aircraft building, in particular, Ukrainian Motor-Sich could reequip SA helicopters with its air engines. SA experts were fascinated with performance of AN-74. For "new Ukrainians" SA could offer dream tours and safari programs, exotic exposure of jungles and wild life. Ukraine also has a lot to offer to SA tourists.

Let us hope that both countries will derive dividends from such friendship, which will bring our people closer.

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